

Interview with Graciela Sacco **by Carlos Motta**

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Carlos Motta: The first time I saw one of your artworks in person was in the exhibit "Contemporary Latin American Photography from New York to Santiago de Chile" at the ILLA in Rome. I was impressed by the simplicity of your aesthetic gesture: shadows of various eyes were projected onto the wall by the contact of light with some small acrylic plates—suspended in the air by invisible nylon threads—that supported the images. The eyes, somewhere between present and absent, revealed and merged with the architecture they now inhabited, occupied an intermediate space between photographic representation and optic illusion, between the present reality and the history of a place of distant beings evoked by memory. Can you tell me more about the relationship between the images you use and the spaces in which they are exhibited?

Graciela Sacco: The work that you saw in that exhibit was part of something that turned out to be like an "assessment" of the visual action that took place in Venice due to my being invited to participate in representation of Argentina at the 49 Biennale di Venezia. This on itself was a big enough challenge due to the fact that it meant working with an urban space charged with so much history, as is that of Venice. A city so "narcissist" that it steals the gazes of everyone who stops there.

Therefore the work was divided into different stages.

1- The photographic performance: the gazes were captured by different people in different parts of the world, who afterward sent them to me and I printed them in order to be able to later on build that public and anonymous gaze that lives within the urban space where they were installed.

2- In the interior space the "Fondaco dei Tedeschi" —where the Argentinean representation took place—they were suspended in the air in order to be able to create the idea, through that installation, that the gazes came from there and it was there that they took control of the space of the street.

3- An interactive website where the visitor can include his or her gaze, wherever the geographic location of that person might be.

4- A postal action that took place before, during and after the event.

The title of the proposal is "Among us" ("Entre nosotros"). And among us, in that space between past and present, between the public and the private, between that city that watches us and the act of those who return that look in a present time. Recently, this work was done in the city of Cartagena, Spain. The installation begins at the Byzantine Wall, an emblematic site charged with the history of the

origins of this city, which extends through all the historic shield of the same, where it can be traced up until the end of August of this year.

CM: That same exhibition gathered the work of various Latin American artists, such as you, Rosangela Rennó, Milagros de La Torre and Marta María Perez Bravo, among others; all preoccupied with the representation of violence. The use of images appropriated from mass media was predominant. Your work, particularly, recurs to this resource as spinal cord. You have recycled images in which their referent is determined by and specific to a political and social context. Is the aesthetic-politic conflict -imposed by publicity and the press- the source of your work? Do you question the veracity of the public image and the ethical problem generated by the manipulation of such by systems of political power?

GS: In my work, I make use of images taken by other people like a way of acting the construction of knowledge of our contemporary time, a totally mediated perception, almost never first-handed and always by parts; hence, from there the use of fragments also becomes an absolute protagonist of my work.

CM: Is your art reacting to the political situation of Argentina's dictatorship? Are these possible important lectures in your work or would you rather remain in an open space where the images are able to evoke political associations parting purely from the aesthetic proposal?

GS: My production is as Argentinean as it would be from any other part of the world in which I am in. My compromise is with the space and time in which I have to live in. Nothing within the social space is alien to me, whether it is good or bad.

CM: For the past two years, "first-world" countries have experienced with their own flesh the reality of violence generated by terrorist acts, generally typified by them as a "third-world" problem. Do you think your work, which content has continuously insisted on dealing with such emblematic political problems, is read in a different way within international circuits at the moment of actual crisis?

GS: I don't know why it should be any different. Evidently, there exists a great mistake in believing that my work, when brushed against an uncomfortable situation, is limited to a space of determined reference when for several years now I have been in many different countries, and when it keeps getting clearer that "quality of life" is not a geographic problem, and when "the horror" and "the bonanza" live within any horizon. I can't imagine the president of an African country begging for charity in the subway of Paris. The artist is a social being and by being one, he or she is intersected by his or her time. There are productions that reflect this point more clearly, yet none is alien. An artwork does not give answers; in any case, it formulates questions.

CM: What is your current art project?

GS: Currently, and for the past couple of years, my observation has been transfixed in place of "transition". People waiting in line occupy a protagonist place in my essays about "the wait". From a technical point of view: heliographies and tossed photographic shadows take hold of the spaces.

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Graciela Sacco is an artist whose work has been internationally shown in museums and galleries worldwide. www.gracielasacco.com

Carlos Motta is a New York based artist and the editor of artwurl.org

Interview translated from Spanish by Carina Gallegos.